

For Immediate Release
 Contact: Mayor's Press Office
 Phone: 312-744-3334
 E-mail:
 Tuesday, January 24, 2006

Mayoral Task Force Releases Recommendations on Prisoner Reentry

Mayor Richard M. Daley today announced \$900,000 in City grants to programs to help former prisoners learn job skills and become productive members of society.

The programs were among the recommendations of the Mayoral Policy Caucus on Prisoner Re-Entry, which released its final report today.

“On average, two-thirds of those released from prison are arrested within three years, and half of them end up back in jail,” Daley said at a news conference at the Greater West Town Community Development Project, 2021 W. Fulton St. “Society is then forced to bear the financial and human cost of their crimes, as well as the cost of their apprehension, conviction and imprisonment.

“We simply have to break that cycle if we expect the crime rate to continue to fall. And that means we have to help ex-offenders rebuild their lives, connect with their families, find meaningful employment and become productive members of society.”

The Caucus, chaired by Roxanne Ward, Vice President of Ariel Capital Management, and Paula Wolff, Senior Executive of Chicago Metropolis 2020, is composed of leaders from government, business, community and faith-based organizations and foundations, as well as ex-offenders, themselves. It spent a year and a half studying issues of prisoner re-entry.

Its report calls for:

- Expanded education and job opportunities, including transitional jobs to help them get the experience they need to find long-term work;
- Improved access to health care, including more substance abuse and mental health treatment;
- More family-friendly policies in the corrections system, including mentoring programs for the children of incarcerated parents; and
- Stronger supports in the community, including local resource centers that make it easier for former prisoners to access needed services.

The City of Chicago has been a national leader in programs for ex-offenders. With the two new programs the Mayor announced today, the City’s financial commitment to prisoner re-entry initiatives totals over \$4.3 million, with another \$4 million in the pipeline.

Daley announced that the City is investing \$500,000 in customized training programs for ex-offenders, which will lead to actual jobs that businesses need filled.

The money will go to the Greater West Town Project to train and place former prisoners in manufacturing and warehousing jobs, and to the Chicago Christian Industrial League to prepare ex-offenders for jobs in food service and maintenance industries.

The City is investing another \$400,000 to support non-profit businesses or social enterprises that provide support services, such as case management and substance-abuse treatment, for ex-offenders and help them learn skills in a

real work environment. Under this initiative, the City will select one or two non-profit businesses and partner them with faculty and students from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business.

"There are many successful social enterprises out there, and we encourage them to apply for this program so that we can help them expand their business operations," Daley said. "Social enterprises are good stepping stones to long-term employment."

Daley also announced a change in the City's personnel policy, which was recommended by the Caucus, that will give former prisoners a better chance of obtain City jobs.

Under the new policy, he said, the City will weigh the relationship between the crime that was committed and the job being sought.

"The City will balance the nature and severity of the crime with other factors, such as the passage of time and evidence of rehabilitation," the Mayor said. "Put more simply, this change means that City hiring will be fairer and more common-sense. It means that former prisoners will have a chance to make their case and maybe land a City job."

"Implementing this new policy won't be easy, but it's the right thing to do," Daley said. "We cannot ask private employers to consider hiring former prisoners unless the City practices what it preaches."

Daley said he was "not looking for sympathy for ex-offenders. They've committed serious crimes, and they deserved their punishment. But I think most Americans would agree they also deserve a second chance -- an opportunity to turn their lives around and begin contributing to society, for a change."

An estimated 42,000 people were released from Illinois prisons last year, with more than half returning to Chicago.

[Click here to download the PDF version of the Final Report](#) of the Mayoral Policy Caucus on Prisoner Reentry.

[Click here to download the PDF version of the Executive Summary](#) highlighting key findings and recommendations from the Mayoral Policy Caucus on Prisoner Reentry.

You will need the free Adobe Acrobat reader to view or print the Final Report and/or the Executive Summary. If you do not have this software, please [go to Adobe's website](#) to download the software.